

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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***THE PEOPLE OF OUR TIME* (1946)**

Tugolbay Sydykbekov (1912–1997)

References:

Sydykbekov, T. (2015). *Bizdin zamandyn kishileri* [The People of our time] (B. Ömürov, Ed.; Vol. 7). Imak-offset.

OVERVIEW

Author

Tugolbay Sydykbekov (1912–1997) was a Kyrgyz writer born in Keng-Suu, in present-day Issyk-Kul Region. Because his official birth date was unknown, he later chose May 14 as his birthday through a family tradition involving his daughter selecting a date at random.

He studied at the Agricultural Technical School in Frunze (1928–1931) and later at the Central Asian Veterinary Institute in Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. He worked at the newspaper *Leninchil Jash* (1931–1936), served as a consultant for the Union of Writers of Kyrgyzstan (1937–1947), and worked as an editor at *Kyrgyz mambas* publishing house (1949–1951).

In the Soviet period, he was labeled a “nationalist writer,” but his earlier Stalin Prize recognition limited political repression against him. He supported objective study of Kyrgyz history, promoted the development of the Kyrgyz language, and openly criticized official shortcomings, leading some scholars to describe him as a Soviet-era Kyrgyz dissident.

Sydykbekov remained a major figure in Kyrgyz literature for nearly seventy years and died in Bishkek on July 19, 1997.

Literary career

He began his literary career as a poet. His first poem, *Who Are These People? (Bular Kimder?)*, was published in the newspaper *Leninchil Jash* on May 1, 1930. Soon afterward, he wrote *The Old Komuz Player (Chal Komuzchu)*, which appeared in the magazine *Chabuul*. His first poetry collection, *Struggle (Kurosh)*, was published in 1933, followed by *Heroes (Baatylar)*, 1936) and *Poet-Nightingale (Akyn-Bulbul)*, 1938). During this period, he also began working actively in prose.

Like many writers of his generation, Sydykbekov's early works reflected social changes in Kyrgyz society, including the new socialist system, labor, and changing social relations.

In 1937–1938, his novel *Keng-Suu (Keng-Suu)* was published in two volumes, becoming one of the first novels in Kyrgyz literature. In the 1950s, he revised it and republished it as *Among the Mountains (Too Arasynda)*, with volumes appearing in 1955 and 1958.

During this period, he also wrote *Poet-Nightingale (Akyn-Bulbul)*, 1938), the essay *Ala-Toodon Jettoo* (1939), the poem *News from the Night Watchman (Tun Jarchysynan Kabar)*, 1939), and the verse tale *The Greedy Father (Ach Koz Ata)*, 1940).

His collection of stories *During the War Days (Sogush Kundorundo)*, 1943) reflects wartime unity and patriotism during World War II.

Between 1938 and 1940, he wrote the novel *Temir (Temir)*, published in 1946, depicting the establishment of Soviet power in southern Kyrgyzstan.

His novel *The People of Our Time (Bizdin Zamandyn Kishileri)*, 1948) marked a major stage in his career. It was first published in *Sovettik Kyrgyzstan (Ala-Too)* and later in Moscow in Russian. In 1949, it received the Stalin Prize, making him one of the leading Kyrgyz writers.

After the war, he contributed to children's literature with *Mountain Children* (*Too Baldary*, 1953). Later, after *Among the Mountains*, he wrote the major novel *Women* (*Zayiptar*). Its first part, *Batiyna*, was published in 1962, and the complete version, including *Mountain Pass* (*Ashuu*), appeared in 1966.

His later works include *Friends* (*Kurbular*) and *Confession* (*Syr Achuu*, 1977), focusing on youth, and *Yimanbay's Character* (*Yimanbay Peyili*, 1980), which continues a character from *Among the Mountains* (*Too Arasynda*).

In his autobiographical works *The Road* (*Jol*, 1982) and *Over the Mountain Passes* (*Bel-Beleste*, 1996), he reflects on his life and experiences.

Novel

The People of Our Time was written between 1943 and 1946, and selected excerpts were first published in the journal *Soviet Kyrgyzstan* (later *Ala-Too*).

The Russian translation of the novel was initiated by Rahmatullin. After his death in 1946, Abushahemtov produced a literal translation of the manuscript. He later collaborated with the Moscow translator Gorbunov, and by 1947 a revised Russian version had been completed.

The Russian edition was published in 1948 by the *Soviet Writer* publishing house. Even before its book publication, parts of the work and critical discussions appeared in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Moscow, June 26, 1947) and *Zvezda Vostoka* (Tashkent, No. 6, 1947).

The original Kyrgyz text was published only in 1949. In the same year, the novel was nominated for the Stalin Prize, and Sydykbekov received the award.

During this period (1941–1954), the USSR State Prize was officially known as the Stalin Prize and was awarded in three degrees. Until the rise of Chyngyz Aitmatov, the novel remained one of the most widely translated works of Kyrgyz literature into foreign languages.

Background

During the period when *The People of Our Time* was published, Soviet cultural policy was characterized by strong ideological control over literature and the arts, particularly through campaigns aimed at eliminating “alien elements” and enforcing political conformity.

Following the Central Committee resolution on the journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, many Kyrgyz educational, scholarly, and literary works were removed from circulation, and even major national cultural texts came under official criticism.

In this context, *The People of Our Time* was also revised under party supervision: its conflicts were softened, while its internationalist and ideological dimensions were strengthened to better conform to the expectations of the Communist Party.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Chargyn – Kolkhoz chairman; grows from conflicted villager into responsible wartime leader

Batish – Chargyn's wife; accountant

Chegirtke – Outsider; uses alcohol, rumors, and connections to influence others

Kakyldak – Strong, impulsive village woman; often in conflict with authorities, linked to gossip

Kanysh – Mother of Kaseyin; symbolizes maternal endurance and wartime waiting

Kaseyin – Soldier at the front; central to emotional conflicts involving Zaryl and Lyuba

Zaryl – Educated young woman; represents hope, education, and wartime emotional struggle

Aymjan – Zaryl's mother; calm, traditional, focused on peace and return of soldiers

Shambet – Kolkhoz leader and soldier; leadership, sacrifice, wartime heroism

Ayganysh – Shambet's wife; endures separation, childbirth, and labor during war

Myskal – Returnee from Ukraine; survivor figure connecting local and wider wartime suffering

Dmitriy – Old blacksmith; symbol of labor, craft, and industrial change

Nadezhda – Dmitriy's wife; maternal worry and home-front hardship

Sergey – Wounded returning soldier; survival and postwar recovery

Tabyldy – Soldier whose return brings collective relief and joy

Akman – Village elder and organizer; involved in labor and local disputes

Akia – Energetic village woman; social catalyst, teasing and community interaction
Gulnar – Young student-worker; new generation adapting to wartime roles
Lyuba – Ukrainian woman linked to Kaseyin; displacement and survival
Nurkasym – District official; supports Charyn's leadership and decisions

SYNOPSIS

The narrative follows Charyn, a kolkhoz leader in a Kyrgyz village during the Soviet era, as his community is transformed by war, collectivization, and shifting social relations. Before the war, village life revolves around agricultural work, travel, friendships, and personal hopes. Young people like Zaryl, Batish, Kaseyin, and Myskal navigate love, arranged marriages, and changing traditions while adapting to Soviet modernization.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the village is drawn into mobilization. Men are sent to the front, and women and elders take over agricultural labor, ensuring production for the Red Army. Letters from soldiers shape emotional life in the village, bringing both hope and grief. Many characters experience loss, uncertainty, and delayed or distorted news from the front, while others return wounded or changed by war.

Conflicts arise within the kolkhoz, particularly involving Charyn, Chegirtke, and Kakyldak, where personal rivalries, accusations, and political manipulation intersect with wartime stress. Despite tensions, collective labor continues, symbolizing resilience and unity.

As the war ends, soldiers gradually return home, including Sergey, Tabyldy, Shambet and others. The community reunites, mourning the dead while celebrating survival. The final image is one of reconstruction: villagers begin building a power station, symbolizing hope, progress, and a new postwar future grounded in collective effort and shared memory.

SCENES

Village Life Before the War: Myskal's Return and Kolkhoz

The Crowded Truck Ride The truck was crowded with passengers traveling along a dusty road. Among them were two men around fifty years old and a woman of sixty. Several young people laughed and joked during the journey. The older woman worried that they were making fun of her, although no one said anything directly. A young woman named Myskal sat nearby. She looked neat, kind, and graceful, which immediately earned the older woman's respect. Strong winds blew across the open truck, making the ride uncomfortable. Feeling squeezed between the two older men, the woman became uneasy. Fortunately, two young women, Akia and Zaryl, kindly invited her to sit beside them.

Fears on the Mountain Road As the truck continued along the winding road, the older woman watched the steep slopes with concern. The vehicle shook whenever it crossed rough ground, and the strong wind added to her anxiety. She feared that the truck might leave its path and tumble down the hillside. Her face showed worry as she gripped the side rail tightly. A younger man named Shambet noticed her fear and tried to comfort her. He explained that every driver knew the road well and understood the safety rules. His calm words eased her mind somewhat, though she remained cautious throughout the journey.

Myskal's Childhood Memory While listening to the conversations around her, Myskal drifted into memories of her childhood. She remembered leaving the village when she was only six years old. At that time there were no proper roads, and people traveled using carts and sledges pulled by donkeys. She could still picture the sad faces of the villagers sitting together during the departure. Her father silently whispered farewell to his homeland. Her mother wore a large turban and worried deeply about her daughter's future. The journey marked the beginning of a new life far from the mountains and valleys where Myskal had been born.

Exile to Ukraine Eighteen years had passed since Myskal left the village. As she grew older, she learned why her family had been forced to leave. During the Stalin era, her parents had been labeled as kulaks and were subjected to repression. They were deported to the Kherson region of Ukraine, far from their native land. Life there was difficult at first, but the family gradually adapted to their new surroundings.

Myskal's father worked hard to support the family until his death years later. Despite the hardships, her parents never forgot their homeland and often spoke about the village they had lost.

Growing Up in Ukraine Myskal spent most of her childhood and youth in Ukraine. As a teenager, she attended a Pioneer camp in Crimea, where she met girls from Kyiv and other cities. They quickly became friends and invited her to visit them during holidays. Through these experiences, Myskal became familiar with Ukrainian culture while still preserving her Kyrgyz roots. She enjoyed school, made many friends, and learned about different regions of the Soviet Union. Her mother encouraged her studies and hoped she would have opportunities that had not been available to previous generations. Those years shaped Myskal into a confident young woman.

A Groom in Kyrgyzstan After Myskal completed her schooling, her mother revealed important family news. She told her that a groom had already been chosen for her in Kyrgyzstan. His name was Turumbek. The arrangement followed an old Kyrgyz tradition in which families sometimes promised future marriages before children were even born or while they were still infants. Myskal listened carefully as her mother explained the custom and the expectations surrounding it. Although she had spent many years in Ukraine, she understood the importance of family traditions. The news filled her with curiosity about her homeland and about the man she was expected to meet.

Returning to Her Homeland Now Myskal was finally returning to the village of her birth. As the truck moved through the countryside, she felt a powerful connection to the land she had known only through childhood memories and her parents' stories. Soviet Kyrgyzstan appeared vibrant and full of life. The scenery inspired her at every turn. She admired the sparkling waters of Issyk-Kul, the majestic mountains rising toward the sky, and the fertile fields stretching across the landscape. Women worked diligently in the fields, contributing to the region's prosperity. Myskal felt proud of her heritage and grateful to experience the spirit of her homeland once again.

Questions on the Road As the truck rolled toward the village, the old woman became curious about the young passengers. She asked Myskal if she had come from *Boronzo*, the Kyrgyz name many villagers used for Frunze. Myskal replied that she had come from Ukraine. The old woman was surprised and said it amazed her that Kyrgyz people lived so far away. She then turned to another young woman, Zaryl, and asked if she had come from Boronzo as well. Zaryl smiled and answered yes. The old woman listened carefully, eager to learn about places beyond her familiar valley and village life.

Shambet Introduces the Travelers Shambet, the chairman of the kolkhoz, decided to introduce everyone properly. Standing in the truck, he explained that Zaryl had traveled among the kolkhozes of the Chuy region to exchange experiences and learn new methods. He proudly described her as a member of an important field trip. Then he introduced Myskal, explaining that she had come from distant lands and was visiting her birthplace. Shambet also shared exciting news about the village's future. He said that electricity would soon arrive, bringing modern improvements to the community.

News of a Funeral During the journey, the old woman revealed why she was traveling to the village. She explained that she was going to the funeral of her nephew, the son of her sister. Her voice became quiet and sad as she spoke. The lively conversations in the truck suddenly felt more serious. Myskal listened carefully and felt a sense of worry. She had returned to reconnect with her homeland and family history, yet the mention of death reminded her of the hardships many families had experienced.

Arrival at the Village At last the truck reached the village. The passengers looked around eagerly as familiar scenes appeared before them. They saw a horseman riding nearby; he was the water distributor, responsible for the irrigation channels. Soon the school came into view, and children could be seen playing outside. The truck finally stopped beside the school building. The old woman pointed toward a gathering and explained that this was where the funeral was taking place. She left the truck with two other passengers and headed toward the mourners. Meanwhile, the younger travelers remained behind, ready to greet the villagers.

Greetings from the Children Zaryl and Akia climbed down from the truck and looked around the village. Nearby, a young boy named Salmoor was herding a calf. Zaryl was delighted to recognize him and called out a greeting. Soon several children ran toward the returning travelers. They were excited to see visitors

from the city and eagerly asked what gifts had been brought back. Their faces shone with curiosity and happiness. The children crowded around the adults, hoping for stories, treats, and surprises.

Dreams of a Bright Future Shambet gathered the villagers and proudly shared news about the future. He announced that Zaryl had brought pencils for the children to use during the upcoming school year. Then he explained that he had brought electrical equipment for the village. Soon, he said, the streets and homes would be lit at night just like those in Frunze. Shambet continued by saying that their kolkhoz would become prosperous and successful. He dreamed of building a millionaire kolkhoz where modern technology, education, and hard work would create a better life for everyone.

News about Turumbek Myskal stayed with Zaryl after arriving in the village. Although they spent time together, Myskal remained quiet and thoughtful. She often thought about Turumbek, the man she had once been promised to marry. She had written him a letter before her journey, but he had never received it. One day she asked young Salmoorbek about the village, the school, and the people who lived there. Finally, she asked about Turumbek. The boy hesitated before answering. Then he quietly told her that Turumbek had died ten days earlier. The news shocked Myskal and filled her heart with sadness and regret.

The Village Learns about Myskal News traveled quickly through the village. Soon everyone knew that Myskal had returned from Ukraine and that she had once been Turumbek's fiancée. The older women discussed the story among themselves. Many felt sorry that Turumbek had never met the young woman who had traveled such a long distance to visit his homeland. They imagined how happy he might have been to see her. Myskal noticed the sympathy in their voices. Although she had never truly known Turumbek, she felt connected to him through family traditions and shared memories.

A Picnic at Issyk-Kul On Sunday the young people of the village organized a picnic beside the beautiful shore of Issyk-Kul. The lake sparkled under the sun, and everyone enjoyed the fresh air and peaceful scenery. Shambet, the chairman of the kolkhoz, joined the group. They drank kymyz, shared food, laughed, and talked together. The gathering brought villagers and visitors closer. For Myskal, the picnic offered a chance to experience the warmth of village life. She watched the mountains reflected in the water and felt connected to her homeland. The day was filled with friendship, music, and cheerful conversation.

Friends and Families During the picnic, Myskal learned more about the young people around her. Zaryl was the only daughter of Bektur and Aiymjan, a kind couple who had long wished for a child. Gulnar was Zaryl's close friend, while Batish, Chargyn, and Elebes were also part of their circle. Shambet's wife, Ayganysh, was expecting a baby, and everyone spoke kindly about her. The friends enjoyed sharing stories and teasing one another. Elebes often made awkward jokes that caused both laughter and embarrassment. The gathering showed the strong friendships that connected the younger generation of the village.

Songs by the Lake As the afternoon continued, the young people began to sing. Shambet played beautiful melodies on the komuz, filling the lakeside with music. Marusya, a Russian girl, surprised everyone by singing a song in Kyrgyz. Her performance was warmly received. Afterward, she invited Myskal, the honored guest, to sing. The young men treated Myskal with great respect and kindness. She felt welcomed despite being a visitor. When her turn came, she sang part of a Ukrainian folk song. The melody carried memories of her life in Ukraine while also connecting her to the people gathered around her.

Remembering Turumbek During the picnic, Chargyn shared stories from his childhood. He spoke about his friend Turumbek and remembered the adventures they had experienced together. One story described how they once chased a wild bird across the countryside. The bird eventually flew into the tent belonging to Myskal's parents. The story made everyone smile. Then the mood became more serious. Several young men spoke about Turumbek's good character and how much they missed him. They expressed sadness that he had died so young. Myskal listened quietly and explained that she had come to visit relatives, friends, and her birthplace.

Village Gossip After the picnic, the women returned home and continued talking among themselves. Some teased Ayganysh, wondering why she had attended the outing when her baby was due soon. Others discussed hairstyles and clothing. The older women remembered that girls once wore many braids,

while married women wore only two. They noted how customs had changed since earlier times. Modern fashions attracted much attention. Myskal's urban clothing from Ukraine seemed unusual and fashionable to many villagers. Batish secretly felt unhappy because she believed her own style was better than everyone else's. The conversations continued late into the evening.

Dreams of Education Zaryl often thought about her future. She had a brother named Tabyldy, who was serving in the army. His wife, Burma, worked hard at the kolkhoz and was respected as a devoted daughter-in-law. Zaryl admired her dedication. Although she valued village life, Zaryl dreamed of continuing her education. She hoped to enter a university one day and learn more about the wider world. At home she balanced her ambitions with family responsibilities. Her experiences in Frunze had encouraged her to think beyond the village. She believed education could help both her family and her community prosper.

Meeting Turumbek's Mother When Zaryl and Myskal entered a house decorated with carpets, blankets, and traditional furnishings, several women were gathered inside. One elderly woman looked closely at Myskal. She was Turumbek's mother. Her eyes filled with emotion as she welcomed the young visitor. She invited Myskal to sit beside her and gently said that if her son had lived, Myskal would have become her daughter-in-law. The room fell silent. The sadness of lost possibilities touched everyone present. Nearby sat Kanysh whose son, Kaseyin, was serving in the army.

A Visit to a Modest Home Later, Turumbek's mother invited Myskal and Zaryl to visit her home. The house was old, modest, and showed signs of poverty. Zaryl explained that the family had once lived comfortably, but Turumbek's illness had changed everything. Tuberculosis had required expensive treatment, and his mother had spent her savings trying to help him recover. Inside, they shared tea and eggs. Then the elderly woman handed Myskal a cup and spoon that had belonged to Turumbek. The simple objects carried deep meaning. Before they left, she embraced Myskal warmly and thanked her for making the journey.

Myskal's Departure The next morning Myskal prepared to leave the village and return to Ukraine. Her visit had been filled with powerful emotions. She had rediscovered the land of her birth, met relatives and friends, and learned more about Turumbek's life and death. The kindness of the villagers touched her deeply. Yet she also felt sadness as she prepared to say goodbye. The mountains, the lake, and the memories she had gathered would remain with her. As she departed, she carried a stronger connection to her heritage and a deeper understanding of the people who had shaped her family's history.

Zaryl's Troubling Dream One morning, Zaryl shared breakfast with her mother and her sister-in-law Burma. During the night she had experienced a troubling dream. In it, Kaseyin, the young man serving in the army, tried to cross a river. However, he could not reach the other side because Zaryl stood there, separated from him by the flowing water. The dream left her feeling uneasy and worried. She did not tell her mother about it. Instead, she kept her concerns to herself. Later that day, Zaryl prepared to go to the fields, where many villagers would gather for work and conversation.

Building the Canal The villagers worked together to improve their future. Men and women labored side by side digging a canal that would bring water to the fields. Shambet, Sergey, Charyn, and Dmitriy worked hard removing stones and clearing the road. The work was difficult, but everyone believed it would help the kolkhoz prosper. While working, they joked and shared stories. One elder told a humorous tale about a nomadic Kyrgyz herder who had seen a kerosene lamp for the first time and thought it was magic. Now the village had electricity, a sign of progress. Zaryl worked too, thinking about Myskal and watching the lake.

The Beginning of War: Farewell from the Village Kolkhoz

News from the West One day a horseman rode quickly through the village streets, waving his hand toward the west. It was Elebes, the kolkhoz accountant. The villagers gathered around him, sensing something was wrong. Akia and the other women asked what had happened. Elebes jumped from his horse and delivered shocking news. The Second World War had begun. Hitler had attacked the Soviet Union. Silence spread across the village. The cheerful mood disappeared instantly. Dmitriy, Shambet, and the others became deeply troubled.

Shambet's Speech The villagers gathered while Shambet read the newspaper and confirmed the terrible news. Zaryl thought sadly that her groom, Kaseyin, might never return from military service. Shambet stood before the people and spoke with determination. He reminded them that the Soviet people must remain strong despite the war. Their plans had been interrupted, but they could not lose hope. He urged everyone to continue working for victory and supporting the country. The Communist Party, he said, called upon every citizen to do their duty.

Farewell to the Shepherds Soon many of the village men prepared to leave for military service. Zaryl worried about her brother Tabyldy, who was already serving in the army. Before departing, Shambet traveled to the highland pastures to say goodbye to the shepherds. He spoke with them about courage and responsibility. Returning home, he watered the apple trees he had helped plant. The simple task reminded him of the peaceful life he was leaving behind. He hoped the trees would continue growing while he was away. Every corner of the village seemed precious as the men prepared for an uncertain future.

Chargyn Visits the Elders Chargyn spent the day informing villagers about the war. He stopped by houses where elderly women sat together in the shade. They listened quietly as he explained that many young men would soon leave for the front. Chargyn invited them to a farewell dinner. The women blessed him and gave him *boorsok*, fried bread wishing him a safe return. Later he visited Kamka, the mother of Turumbek. She asked where the fighting would take place. When Chargyn answered that it would be in the west, she became sad.

Chargyn's Unhappy Marriage Chargyn carried another sorrow in his heart. For years villagers spread a superstition that he carried a mysterious mark and that any woman who married him would die within days. Because his first wife died after five days. Many young women feared the rumor, and their families opposed marriage. At twenty-five, Chargyn finally married Aisha, a woman who had been divorced three times. However, her father Orok disapproved. The morning after the wedding, he arrived with relatives and took Aisha away. Chargyn was heartbroken. Now, as war approached, he regretted having no wife, children, or family of his own to leave behind.

The Farewell Feast Chargyn returned home feeling lonely and disappointed. His nephew Salmoorbek sensed his sadness but did not understand its cause. Wanting to honor the departing soldiers, Chargyn asked his brother Akman to slaughter a sheep for a farewell dinner. Akman agreed, and soon many elderly villagers gathered. Dmitry and his wife attended, along with Kamka and other respected elders. They shared food and memories together. During the meal, people spoke of bravery and tradition. They called upon the spirit of Manas to protect the soldiers and prayed that the war would end in victory and peace.

Akman's Determination Although Akman was sixty-five years old, he had registered himself as fifty because he wanted to continue serving his community. As the village water distributor, he worked diligently managing irrigation and caring for the fields. When he learned that Chargyn would soon leave for war, he hurried home to prepare. Opening his wooden chest, he found only a small amount of money and worried it would not be enough. He sent young Salmoorbek to fetch water while his wife prepared food.

Dmitriy's House Akman visited Dmitriy's house to seek assistance. The home was neat and filled with flowers, and he admired its beauty. He wondered when Kyrgyz families might have houses like this. Yet on that day the atmosphere felt heavy. Cigarette smoke filled the rooms, something unusual for the family. Sergey, Dmitriy's son, was preparing to leave for war. His mother Nadezhda struggled to hide her tears. Friends and relatives gathered to say goodbye. Shambet assured everyone that the kolkhoz stood ready to support the soldiers. Dmitry cried openly, while Sergey encouraged his parents to remain hopeful and strong.

Zaryl's Embroidery At home, Zaryl felt cold and anxious about the future. She sat quietly working on embroidery while thinking about the war. Her younger friend Gulnar entered the room full of energy and tried to cheer her up. Zaryl explained that she was stitching the design as a memory of peaceful days. The work reminded her of happier times before fear and uncertainty entered the village. Gulnar admired the embroidery and suggested giving it to her brother Shambet as a keepsake. She admitted that she had not prepared any gifts.

The Village Farewell The entire village gathered beside the school to say goodbye to the soldiers. Mothers, wives, sisters, and grandmothers stood together, many unable to stop crying. Men carried food and bowls of kymyz, hoping to share one final meal with the departing soldiers. Gifts and blessings were offered. Kamka spoke bravely, telling the women not to lose hope. She reminded them that her own son had died and encouraged them to believe their sons would return. Elders prayed for protection and victory. The gathering united the community in grief, courage, and determination as war approached.

Departure for War Fifteen men, including Shambet, Sergey, and many others, received military summons and prepared to leave. Chargyn's call arrived shortly afterward. Families rushed to provide food, clothing, and supplies. The villagers embraced one another and exchanged final words. Before departing, Shambet addressed the people. He urged those remaining behind to work hard and keep the kolkhoz strong. He said that if his wife gave birth to a son while he was away, the child should be named Jengish, meaning Victory. Soon ten horse-drawn carts carried the soldiers away from the Issyk-Kol kolkhoz, beginning their long journey to war.

At the Military Office and Return from the City When the men were called to the city military office, Chargyn was not included in the first list of soldiers. He traveled with Akia, Marusya, and Ayganysh, Shambet's wife, to say farewell to the departing men. In the city, Chargyn delayed the return after meeting Chegirtke, and several hours passed before they left. On the way back, the journey became tense when Ayganysh suddenly went into labor. The women panicked but quickly organized help. A passing cart was stopped, and an experienced elderly midwife was called.

Birth on the Road and Shambet's Lineage Ayganysh's labor began unexpectedly while returning from the city. The women traveling with her acted quickly, stopping another cart and asking for help from an elderly woman known for delivering many children. Despite the moving carts and rough road, she safely delivered a healthy baby boy. Everyone felt relief and joy. Chargyn, witnessing the event, congratulated Shambet emotionally, saying that his lineage had continued through the newborn son. The

Waiting Families and Letters from the Front In the village, families waited anxiously for news from the front. Kanysh, the mother of soldier Kaseyin, had not received a letter for four months and lived in constant worry. Her son's fiancée, Zaryl, also struggled with uncertainty. Aiymjan, mother of Tabyldy, another soldier, hoped for her son's safe return. In his last letter, Kaseyin had written that he would return in autumn, giving his mother temporary comfort. However, silence continued afterward. The absence of communication increased fear among families, who gathered often to share hopes, memories, and emotional support while waiting for their loved ones.

Chargyn's Appointment as Kolkhoz Leader Chargyn was later invited by the district head to discuss kolkhoz affairs. He questioned why he was not sent to the front, and the official explained that some people were needed to maintain the kolkhoz. Chargyn provided detailed information about agricultural conditions and village life. Soon after, he was appointed as kolkhoz leader. At first, he refused, but the villagers and Nurkasym, his friend persuaded him to accept responsibility. Nurkasym advised him to act seriously and control his emotions, especially in dealing with conflicts. Chargyn finally agreed and began managing livestock and farming operations.

Kakyldak's Outburst and the Shocked Chargyn One day, a woman named Kakyldak rode a cow through the village, loudly complaining that the kolkhoz did not give her a horse. In anger, she shouted that all men should die. Chargyn was shocked and asked why she would say such a thing. She replied bitterly that Kanysh's son Kaseyin had married a Russian woman and even had a child, while Zaryl was still waiting for him in the village. Troubled, Chargyn decided to investigate. He went to Ayganysh's house, where women confirmed that a Russian woman had arrived asking for Kanysh, Kaseyin's mother.

War Rumors and the Arrival of the Russian Woman Meanwhile, rumors spread that the German army had occupied Moscow and that civilians might be relocated to Kyrgyzstan. Villagers interpreted the news in different ways, increasing anxiety. Women in the village discussed a Russian woman who had come with a child to Kanysh's house. They felt sympathy for Zaryl, who was unaware of the situation. According to custom, the woman had come to introduce herself as the new bride's family. Confusion, fear, and gossip mixed together as wartime uncertainty deepened emotional tension within the community and strained relationships among young people.

Gulnar, Batish, and Zaryl's Broken Expectations Zaryl had gone to the district center for a teachers' meeting two days earlier. During her absence, Gulnar, an eighth-grade student, took over wage recording work in the kolkhoz. On her way home from school, she heard about the Russian woman at Kanysh's house and was shocked. Later, she went to the administrative office and saw Batish working as a new accountant. Gulnar cried, believing Kaseyin had married a Russian woman after years of Zaryl's waiting. Batish responded coldly, saying men were dying in war and marriage was uncertain, revealing jealousy and emotional conflict among the young women.

Rumors, Return, and the Arrival of Lyuba

Aiymjan's Thoughts and Zaryl's Return Aiymjan, Zaryl's mother, heard the village rumors but remained calm and reserved. She believed her daughter would find a suitable husband and wished only for the war to end so all men could return safely. When Zaryl came back from the district meeting, she reported that it had been productive and emphasized the need to work for victory. However, she sensed that something was troubling her mother.

Arrival of the Ukrainian Woman During seed sorting, village women saw a woman with a baby asking for Kanysh, Kaseyin's mother. Burma mistakenly translated her words, saying she was Kanysh's daughter-in-law. The villagers led her to the house, where she was warmly welcomed despite confusion. The Ukrainian woman was surprised by local customs, including bowing and touching greetings. She admired their kindness and hospitality. Later, villagers gathered in the evening, including Dmitriy, Nadezhda, Akman, Akia, Marusya, and Shambet's family.

War Revelation, Identity, and the Child's Naming When Dmitriy and Marusya translated, shocking truth emerged. The German army had bombed Ukraine, and Lyuba had lost her family. Soviet soldiers rescued her after she gave birth, and one of them was Kaseyin. Before separation, Kaseyin wrote to his mother, confirming safety and asking her to care for Lyuba and the child. Kanysh became angry at earlier mis-translations of Burma. The child's name was debated: locals called him Asker, while Lyuba insisted on Mikola, given by his father. Chargyn resolved the matter by giving him both names, Asker-Mikola, symbolizing unity and shared identity.

Village Duty under Chargyn's Leadership

Supply Orders for the Red Army Fund Chargyn announced strict wartime duties for the kolkhoz. Within three days, the village must deliver about 39,700 pounds of grain, nearly 20 tons, to the dock for the Red Army fund. This was the first urgent task. In addition, the kolkhoz had to transport 550 pounds of butter using its own wagons. Forty horses were also assigned for military service. Each horse required full equipment, including saddles, harnesses, feed bags, saddle blankets, and enough feed and hay for three days. Chargyn also instructed the honored mothers to sew warm clothing. Everything produced would be collected and distributed fairly among those in need.

The Blacksmith Dmitriy and the War Effort In the kolkhoz, the old blacksmith Dmitriy no longer worked as calmly as before. His beard had turned gray, and he often came home late from night work. His wife, Nadezhda, sometimes did not even notice his arrival. Despite little sleep, he woke early every day. One morning, after tea, he rolled a cigarette, smoked deeply, and looked at a poster that read, "Everything for the Front!" Nadezhda worried about their son Sergey, who had gone to war and had not written for three months. Dmitriy comforted her, saying communication was difficult in wartime. He wore his old medals proudly.

War Meeting and Horse Donation During the war years, a large meeting was held in the kolkhoz. Villagers, teachers, and officials gathered as the school yard filled with people. The purpose was to support the Red Army by selecting and sending horses for the front. The atmosphere was serious and emotional, especially for mothers whose sons had gone to war. Officials gave speeches praising unity, sacrifice, and victory. Then Kanysh passionately about her son Kaseyin at the front and her duty to the homeland. She donated warm clothes and supported sending horses.

Everything for the Front During these days, Chargyn walked calmly thinking to himself: "Our work is truly serving the front. We have already sent about 39,683 pounds of wheat and 551 pounds of butter. We prepared the forty Karakul horses, fully equipped and ready. Everything was carefully organized and

completed with great effort. The mothers also contributed by sewing warm clothing, and the girls gave their handmade gifts. We even held a large ceremonial sending-off.

Shambet's Letter from the Front Shambet wrote a letter from the front describing his life as a scout in the army. He explained that he had been on dangerous missions for three months and had not been able to write earlier. He recalled how he and his comrade Sergey entered enemy positions and survived many close calls during operations. In one engagement, they destroyed a tank and eliminated several enemy soldiers, actions that brought recognition from their commanders. He also reported that they had obtained important intelligence information for the unit. The unit praised his bravery, and he was awarded an order. He sent greetings to his family.

Wartime Labor Chargyn supervised the large storage yard, checking grain output and coordinating transport. Akia and the group of women repaired sacks, sorted wheat, and prepared apples for shipment in the packing area. Burma's brigade cleaned and dried grain in the threshing section, working late into the evening. Lyuba assisted with grain loading and helped carry filled sacks to the storehouse. Marusya's team transported fertilizer to the fields using three carts. Zaryl led a group of pioneers who collected apples and sorted damaged fruit for disposal in the far corner shed.

Akia Teases Chargyn in Front of the Women As Chargyn entered the threshold, Akia grabbed him with three women holding him tightly. The girls laughed and mocked him, pinching and teasing him. Chargyn forced a smile, pretending it was a joke to escape their pressure. Akia provoked him, asking directly whether he would take a wife or not. The girls surrounded him, laughing and touching him, while Luba watched confused and shy. The house filled with laughter and playful cruelty. Chargyn, overwhelmed, laughed nervously and endured their teasing, thinking of his loneliness and the absence of Sergey, Shambet, and other friends who could have lightened the mood.

The Decision about Marriage Akia demanded seriousness and ordered the women to read Shambet's letter addressed to Jengish, his son. Ayganysh carefully took the letter from her chest and read it aloud. The room fell silent as the girls stopped laughing. The message hinted at war, duty, and leaving for the army. Chargyn listened, thinking deeply about Shambet and Sergey, recalling their absence and sacrifices. Akia insisted again that Chargyn must choose a wife quickly, pressuring him with sharp words. Chargyn finally surrendered verbally, while the women insisted he must marry.

Chargyn's Rivalry with Chegirtke

Chargyn's Reflection Chargyn, now a respected kolkhoz leader, sat in his office late at night and watched his wife Batish diligently working with numbers. He admired her intelligence and beauty, feeling both pride and tenderness toward her. Their relationship was shaped by duty, work, and quiet affection. Meanwhile, his old rival Chegirtke still cast a shadow over Chargyn's life, although their conflict had softened over time. Rumors in the village and past tensions continued to circulate, but Chargyn remained focused on responsibility and progress. He remembered how it happened.

Chegirtke's Visit to Kakyldak's House and His Ambitions On a cold winter night with heavy snow and strong wind, Chegirtke arrived at Kakyldak's house and entered without waiting. He warmed himself by the stove and demanded hot tea and vodka. Kakyldak recognized him and questioned why he was not serving in the army, but he avoided a direct answer and instead spoke loudly about war work and discipline. He drank bozo, boasting about his connections in regional and central offices and his ability to move between positions. He criticized the local leader Chargyn and discussed village affairs. Kakyldak suggested Zaryl and later Batish as potential brides. Chegirtke agreed, left money on the table, and departed with plans to return.

Batish at Kakyldak's House Kakyldak invited Batish to her house and prepared food on the table. Batish sat and ate bread, cheese, eggs, and cream. Kakyldak spoke about Chegirtke and described his work, travel, and future position. She suggested Chegirtke as a possible husband for Batish. Batish ate silently and did not answer. Kakyldak continued speaking and encouraged her to think about marriage. Batish listened without agreeing or refusing and felt pressure and inner discomfort about the decision. After finishing the meal, Batish stood up and left the house. Kakyldak stayed inside and continued speaking about the marriage proposal and Chegirtke's future plans.

Letter Writing Meeting in the Kolkhoz The meeting was organized by Chargyn in the office. The women gathered around the table, where food was placed, and they talked while preparing a collective letter for soldiers at the front. Batish sat quietly, keeping her gaze lowered and not joining the conversation. Chargyn encouraged everyone to write and share their thoughts. During the discussion, Akia jokingly suggested that Chargyn should marry Batish, which caused laughter among the group. Zaryl and Akia continued guiding the writing process and organizing the letter. Batish listened in silence and became emotional as she thought about her uncertain future and personal worries.

Chargyn and Batish: Silent Walk and Growing Affection Later, Chargyn walked out first, and Batish followed silently behind him. Akia jokingly told Chargyn to escort Batish home. On the quiet road, they walked together in silence, both uncertain but already emotionally drawn to each other. Over time, Chargyn and Batish married, and his affection for her deepened as he became protective and proud of her. Batish slowly grew to trust him as well, even though memories of Chegirtke still lingered in her mind and occasionally caused her pain.

Conflict with Kakyldak

Kakyldak at the Mill At the mill, Kakyldak worked through the night, grinding grain while the wheel roared and flour dust filled the air. She was exhausted but refused to stop. Chargyn arrived, and tension immediately rose between them. The discussion turned bitter when the issue of the loan and the payment receipt was raised. Kakyldak denied owing anything without proof and sharply demanded accountability, accusing the officials of unfair treatment. Chargyn tried to calm her, speaking more gently, but she resisted humiliation and gossip about her name.

Accusation at the Mill Kakyldak ran out of the mill, shouting and bleeding, accusing Chargyn of attacking her over a loan dispute. The villagers gathered in shock. Akman arrived and demanded an explanation. Chargyn insisted he only came to settle the grain work and remind her about the unpaid wartime loan. Kakyldak, furious and humiliated, claimed he broke her tooth and insulted her. The crowd became confused, some siding with her anger, others doubting her story. Kamka defended Chargyn, saying Kakyldak was always difficult and emotional. Tension rose as misunderstandings spread, and Chargyn struggled to prove his innocence before the watching villagers.

Chegirtke's Promises and Kakyldak's Anger Chegirtke, drunk and excited at the gathering, boasted to Kakyldak that if Chargyn became chairman, he would fix her teeth better than gold, and make her "sing" with happiness. Kakyldak, already angry and in pain from her broken tooth, believed his words and grew even more emotional, cursing Chargyn and the situation. Chegirtke continued joking and promising benefits, speaking loudly about future power and wealth. Later, after the conflict with Chargyn spread in the village, Chegirtke urged Kakyldak to officially complain and sue. He pushed her to accuse Chargyn seriously, mixing promises of justice with manipulation. Kalyipa hesitated, but Chegirtke insisted, turning village gossip and anger into a formal accusation.

Chargyn before the Prosecutor After the incident, Chargyn felt deep shame and anger. He walked around thinking that life had treated him unfairly. He regretted getting involved in a quarrel with a woman and thought he should have gone to the front instead of facing such humiliation at home. Soon he was called to the prosecutor's office. The prosecutor questioned him seriously about the collective farm and the incident. Chargyn answered nervously but tried to explain what had happened. He said he did not intend to harm anyone. The prosecutor listened carefully, trying to understand the truth and decide whether Chargyn was guilty or misunderstood.

Chargyn and Chegirtke at the Prosecutor's Office Chargyn became angry after he was summoned to the prosecutor's office and faced accusations in the Terek-Mazar region. He isolated himself for three days and drank heavily. Chegirtke watched him and planned to influence him. He later met Chargyn and acted like a friend, talking about Batish and offering food and alcohol to gain trust. They walked through muddy streets while discussing war, politics, and personal betrayal. Chargyn stayed suspicious but listened. Chegirtke used humor and flattery to manipulate him.

Chargyn's Anger toward Chegirtke Chargyn had recently come out of a humiliating situation and was still filled with anger when he met Chegirtke. Chegirtke had been watching him for some time and deliber-

ately approached him, pretending friendliness. He brought alcohol and food, trying to soften Chargyn's mood and gain his trust. During their walk, he mocked him indirectly, spoke about Batish, old promises, and village rumors, while secretly probing Chargyn's emotions. He also mixed jokes with political talk about war and authority. Chegirtke deliberately mentioned Batish, reminding Chargyn of past promises and expensive gifts like a fur coat, silk dress, and boots. His words were meant to provoke and weaken him. Chargyn became increasingly irritated, rejected the flattery, and finally shouted at Chegirtke, driving him away in anger.

Villagers United in Grief and Labor

Loss and Hidden Mourning in the Village Chargyn later received a letter from the front reporting the death of his close friend Elebes. The news broke his heart and made him realize the cruelty of war and loss. Batish comforted him, saying that soldiers were brave and their sacrifice would bring victory. Chargyn accepted the pain and quietly honored his friend in silence, riding away while reflecting on friendship and sacrifice. Meanwhile, in Akman's courtyard, villagers gathered under the pretext of a meeting, secretly preparing to receive Akia without revealing Elebes's death. Women cooked and acted normally, hiding grief beneath polite conversation and hospitality throughout the tense gathering.

Grief Transformed into Collective Resolve When the truth of Elebes's death in war is revealed, Akia collapses in grief, and the house erupts in mourning. Yet Akman and others soon redirect sorrow into strength, urging restraint and unity. They argue that tears alone cannot answer the enemy; instead, collective effort, discipline, and loyalty to the homeland are required. Voices rise in support, transforming private loss into shared purpose. War is described as a time demanding endurance, sacrifice, and solidarity. Even sorrow is reframed as responsibility toward the living and the fallen, turning personal tragedy into a call for collective resistance and determination.

Gulnar's Visit and the Children's Curiosity In a village gathering, Gulnar led a group of children through the settlement and encouraged them to behave and observe carefully. The children, especially Satai, were fascinated by war imagery and kept asking questions about tanks, their size, and how they were made. Gulnar explained them in simple language, describing tanks as powerful machines operated from inside like small rooms. The children listened with excitement and imagination. Through her guidance, Gulnar introduced ideas from newspapers and collective knowledge, trying to shape their understanding of the world. The experience connected their play and curiosity with images of industrial and military development.

Dmitriy's Workshop and the Memory of Labor The group later entered Dmitriy's blacksmith workshop, where ironwork and heavy labor filled the space with sound and heat. Dmitriy reflected on his younger years and on past conflicts, comparing earlier times of rivalry and violence with the present era of cooperation and production. The workshop stood as a symbol of this new order, where machines and tools replaced old struggles. Gulnar explained the meaning of factories and collective effort, while the children listened as if they were hearing a story. Dmitriy spoke with pride about labor, unity, and the belief that human work could create powerful machines like tanks.

Chegirtke's Accusations and Expulsion Chegirtke came to the village pretending to be concerned about people. In fact, he collected information and spread rumors about Akman. He said Akman was deceiving workers and taking their money. He also wrote several complaints against him. Later, Chegirtke entered Akman's house where villagers were sharing meat after a slaughter. He accused Akman of wrongdoing and suggested the meat was stolen. Akman replied calmly that it was earned through honest labor. Chegirtke continued to argue and repeated his accusations. Finally, Akman became angry and ordered him to leave the house immediately. Chegirtke left, still convinced of his claims.

Prosecutor's Visit and Clarification of Truth The prosecutor came to the kolkhoz not to judge from outside, but to study its work closely. He met farmers, entered their homes, and saw that most rumors about Chairman Chargyn were false. People said Chargyn was a simple man who had changed through work and responsibility. The prosecutor listened carefully and formed his own view. He later met Chargyn and discussed his decisions. Chargyn admitted he had once been impulsive but now supported collective work and rejected useless conflict. The prosecutor praised the kolkhoz for progress and fair organization. Finally, Akman explained his case honestly, and misunderstandings were cleared.

Spring Agricultural Work That year, agricultural work was well organized. As soon as the snow melted, ploughing began. Workers of all ages came to the fields, from young boys to elderly villagers. Horses and tractors were used together, and the land was deeply turned for sowing. Chargyn supervised the work carefully. He checked the depth of ploughing, the quality of seeds, and the preparation of the fields. Women worked in brigades, recording labor days and helping with planting. The whole village was busy with sowing, weeding, and irrigation. Water was directed through canals, and the fields slowly turned green and fertile.

Kanysh Looked after Mikola-Asker Since Lyuba had started working in the fields, Kanysh had cared for her little son, Mikola-Asker. Lyuba spent long days driving a tractor and often could not return home until late. Kanysh treated the child like her own grandson. She played with him, sang lullabies, and hoped his father would return safely from the war. As Mikola-Asker grew, he became an active and curious toddler. He chased the family cat, climbed onto furniture, and played with his father's komuz. Although he sometimes caused trouble, his cheerful behavior filled the house with happiness. One day, Kamka called Kanysh outside after a vehicle arrived in the village.

Sergey Returns

A Hero's Return and a Shared Resolve Sergey returned home after the war and was warmly welcomed by his parents, relatives, and neighbors. His mother embraced him with tears of joy, grateful that he had survived despite losing a leg. Friends and villagers gathered to celebrate his safe return, while also remembering those who had died in the war. During the gathering, Akia spoke about the pain of losing her beloved husband and explained that her hard work had been her way of fighting the enemy. She raised a toast, expressing hope for victory and peace, while everyone honored both the returning soldiers and the fallen heroes.

Sergey Visits Villagers After returning from the war, Sergey visited every house in his village. He met old friends, comforted families who had lost loved ones, and spent time with children. He especially visited Shambet's family, but his wife kept asking whether Shambet was still alive. Sergey could not tell her the painful truth and only said that they had been separated during the war. Later, he walked through the places of his childhood, remembering the happy days he had shared with Shambet. Seeing an old tree where they had carved the year "1925," Sergey realized that time had passed, but his friend's memory remained alive in his heart.

Women on the Home Front Sergey walked through his quiet village and noticed that almost everyone was working in the fields. He was surprised to see women cutting hay with scythes, doing work that men had done before the war. He admired their strength and realized they were fighting their own battle by feeding the country. Akia and the other women joked to keep their spirits high, but their laughter often turned to tears as they remembered their husbands at the front. Later, Sergey climbed the hill where he and his friend Shambet had once dreamed of returning together. Sadly, only Sergey came home, carrying his friend's memory.

Harvest of Hope Summer blessed the village with timely rain and abundant sunshine, producing a rich harvest. Fields of wheat ripened as collective farmers, young and old, worked tirelessly to gather every grain. Women harvested with sickles, while machines, tractors, and combines operated from dawn until night. Every kernel represented sweat, sacrifice, and hope for victory. Songs echoed across the fields, expressing faith that loved ones would soon return from the front. No one wished to waste the precious crop earned through such hardship. Despite exhaustion, the villagers remained united, believing that diligent labor would strengthen the nation and hasten the end of the war.

Shambet's Legacy Inspires the Village On a quiet Sunday evening, the villagers gathered as Sergey recounted his final battle alongside Shambet. He described Shambet's extraordinary courage during a fierce assault against German forces, where he fought fearlessly before disappearing amid the chaos of battle. Although Shambet's fate remained uncertain, his bravery deeply moved everyone. Ayganysh and her young son grieved, while the elders urged them to remain hopeful. Chargyn reminded the villagers that honoring Shambet meant continuing the work he valued most—laboring for the collective good and supporting the war effort.

Myskal Comes to the Village

Myskal's Return from Ukraine After returning from occupied Ukraine, Myskal visited Kamka and recounted the tragic story of her wartime experiences. During the occupation, she and her widowed mother struggled to survive under constant fear. Her mother kept her hidden, dressed her in ragged clothing, and even urged her to pretend to be mentally disabled so German soldiers would ignore her. Food became scarce, and two hens hidden in a shed became their only reliable source of nourishment. When German soldiers discovered the birds, her mother desperately pleaded with an officer to spare them. Instead, he coldly drew his pistol and shot her. Helpless and overwhelmed with grief, Myskal buried her mother in the garden with the help of elderly neighbors, carrying the memory of that brutal loss with her ever since.

Joining the Partisans After her mother's death, Myskal could no longer remain a passive victim. Together with two other young women and three men, she escaped under the cover of night from the occupied Ukrainian countryside. Their guide was Ostap, a former forester whose courage, wisdom, and humor inspired the group despite his failing health. He led them safely to a partisan detachment fighting behind German lines. Among the partisans, Myskal encountered people of extraordinary bravery and compassion who risked everything for their homeland.

People still Work Hard

Myskal reunited with Kamka Myskal returned from the war front. She arrived from Ukraine after she had survived intense combat experiences. She told Kamka how she had taken revenge for her mother's death, lying in ambush and attacking a passing vehicle, killing officers before she was evacuated from the front by airplane. When Satai and Salmoorbek spread the news of her return, the villagers were shocked and were unsure whether Kamka had ever had a daughter. Soon, curiosity grew and people gathered at Kamka's house. Myskal reunited with Kamka, and the village was filled with discussion, celebration, and reflection on war.

Kakyldak and Kalyipa at Work Kakyldak became a hardworking peasant woman who labored in the fields from early morning, cutting grain with a sickle. She felt guilty about past mistakes, especially toward Chargyn and her brother Chegirtke, who had been arrested. Because of this, she became more serious and focused on work, trying to redeem herself through labor. Over time, she became known for her dedication. People began to respect her effort and even compared her with other strong workers like Kalyipa. On a communal workday, everyone went to the fields together, competing in productivity. Kakyldak also took pride in her labor, believing that honest work brought dignity and meaning to life.

Myskal Works at the Harvest Field Myskal returned from Ukraine after surviving the front and joined women harvesting wheat in the village. She met Zaryl, who told her that Kalyipa and other women now worked in brigades, ploughing, irrigating, mowing, and harvesting together like men. In the field, Kalyipa cut wheat quickly with a sickle, her face covered in sweat, urging others to keep pace. Myskal watched silently, surprised by their endurance. Tractors roared nearby, raising dust over the wide fields. Zaryl and Myskal walked and talked about war, change, and work. Women sang songs while cutting wheat. By evening, the harvest was completed.

Women's Night Gathering and Emotional Stories At night, the women gathered around a lit lamp in a warm room and shared stories while eating and drinking. They sat in a circle, passing bowls to each other and talking loudly. Some smoked cigarettes, others listened quietly with tears in their eyes. Burma, who lost her husband five years ago, cried and spoke about her loneliness. Akia comforted her and joked to lighten the mood. The women laughed, cried, and sang songs about love and war. They remembered their husbands and sons at the front. The room was full of emotions, memories, and shared sorrow.

Heroes Return from the War: The End of War

Kaseyin's Return A Russian woman arrived with a soldier, Kaseyin, announcing that she had brought her son home. Kaseyin had returned from the hospital, weakened by war but slowly recovering. As he traveled through the mountains of Ala-Too, hope replaced fear. When he finally reached the village, his return brought shock, relief, and emotional reunion for his family.

The Healing Song News of Kaseyin's return from the war spread quickly through the village, filling homes with hope and sorrow. That evening, Kanysh's house was crowded with relatives and neighbors who came to see him. They spoke of his bravery, suffering, and the fate of other missing soldiers. Zaryl waited silently, watching the road with hope and anxiety. Kaseyin played the komuz, and its music filled the room with memory and peace. The song united everyone, easing grief and turning sorrow into shared hope for the future.

The Found Soldier and the Frontline Letter Chargyn arrived at the village in great haste and brought life-changing news. He announced that Tabyldy, long missing in the war, had been found alive. The news filled Aymjan and Burma with overwhelming joy, and they embraced Chargyn in tears. Later, in the crowded club, Chargyn read Tabyldy's letter aloud. Tabyldy described his harsh experiences on the front, long marches, and wartime hardships. He also recalled moments of solidarity among soldiers of different nations, bringing both laughter and tears.

Tabyldy's Letter Tabyldy's letter was read aloud in the crowded village hall by Chargyn whose voice trembled with pride and emotion as he described war journeys, a chance encounter with a Belarusian soldier, and memories of a loyal horse named Kara-Ker that had saved lives before falling in battle. The audience listened silently then erupted in tears and applause as the mother of Tabyldy embraced him thanking fate for bringing news that transformed grief into collective hope and unity across the wartime community while elders reflected on sacrifice, dignity, and humanity rediscovered through suffering and resilience shaping memory forever and peace.

A Day of Another Good News The village was celebrating the 27th anniversary of the October Revolution. People were happy after a night of festivities. In the morning, Chargyn received a letter. It said Shambet had been wounded in the war but survived and was returning home after leaving the hospital. The house filled with joy. Neighbors and relatives came to congratulate them. Everyone ran into the street, sharing the good news. The fear of death turned into happiness. People talked about peace and victory. They believed life would become better after the war. Hope and unity filled the village again. The whole village rejoiced together.

Shambet's Letter and the Celebration When Ayganysh received a letter confirming that Shambet was alive and recovering from his wound, the house was filled with guests and celebration. The village was already in a festive mood, marking victory and hope after the difficult war years. Ayganysh and Akia, who had once feared loss, now shared relief rather than grief. They cared for Jengish as they prepared for the gathering, where music, laughter, and news from the front circulated. The arrival of Zaryl and Kaseyin with music deepened the joyful atmosphere.

The Blacksmith Workshop In the workshop, Sergey and Dmitriy worked with glowing iron. The red metal was heated in the fire, then shaped with heavy blows. Sergey lifted the hammer and struck the metal on the anvil until it became thin and straight like a ruler. The second blacksmith cooled the iron in water. Chargyn came in and spoke with Sergey about leaving for the front, but Sergey explained that Party orders decide assignments. While they talked, the hammering continued. The bellows breathed fire, and the workshop filled with heat, sparks, and smoke as the metal slowly took its final shape.

The Heroes Meet again in the Village After more than a year Tabyldy returned from Berlin with medals. Soon after, Shambet came back from Vienna, wounded but alive. His injury had healed, and he proudly walked through the village with Ayganysh and their son, who had grown into a strong boy during the war years. Shambet visited fields, farms, and the station with Chargyn, speaking about rebuilding and work. In every house, celebration and relief replaced fear. The war had ended, but the bonds between people remained stronger than ever, shaped by loss, hope, and return. Lyuba's husband returned too.

Three Generations by the Lake Friends gathered again by the lakeshore: Dmitriy, Nadezhda, Akman, Shambet, Tabyldy, and their families. The captain was leaving the next day, so the meeting became a farewell. They walked along the water, speaking about the lake, fishing, and the changing land. Children played nearby, laughing and running, while adults discussed work, plans, and education. Shambet spoke about building a power station and improving the village economy. Everyone agreed a new stage of life was beginning. The old and young sat together, watching children grow.

Building the Power Station Shambet brought Nurkasym to Chargyn's house and spoke about starting construction. Chargyn and his wife Batish welcomed the guests warmly and served breakfast. They talked about life, work, and the future of the village. They rode horses toward the river valley. Shambet showed the place for the power station. Dmitriy also arrived and discussed the plan. Everyone agreed the site was suitable, with strong water flow and good land. Soon they began working. People dug, carried stones, and built together. Shambet encouraged everyone, and the work continued with energy and hope for a better future.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Chargyn

Chargyn is the central figure of the novel, a kolkhoz chairman whose life reflects the pressures of war, ideology, and rural transformation. He begins as a conflicted village man shaped by personal disappointments and social tensions, but gradually develops into a responsible wartime leader. As chairman, he must manage labor discipline, agricultural production, and state supply demands while facing constant rumors, interpersonal conflicts, and political pressure. His character is shaped by both public authority and private vulnerability, making him a figure who embodies the emotional and administrative burdens of wartime village leadership.

Dutiful Chargyn is consistently presented as dutiful through his commitment to fulfilling kolkhoz and wartime obligations. He organizes grain deliveries, supervises harvesting, and ensures that quotas for the Red Army fund are met, even under difficult conditions. His decisions are guided by responsibility rather than personal convenience, as he prioritizes collective needs over individual concerns. Even when he is emotionally unsettled or socially criticized, he continues to focus on production targets and administrative tasks. This sense of duty also appears in his willingness to accept leadership roles he initially resists, showing that he understands obligation as something unavoidable rather than optional. His dutifulness makes him a stabilizing force in the village system.

Resilient Chargyn demonstrates resilience in the way he responds to public conflict and personal humiliation without collapsing into passivity or revenge. When accused by Kakyldak at the mill, he attempts to explain and control the situation rather than escalate it. After being called to the prosecutor's office and facing suspicion, he endures the experience and continues his work afterward. Even when manipulated by Chegirtke or surrounded by damaging rumors, he persists in his role as chairman. His resilience is not emotional denial but sustained functionality under pressure, allowing him to remain active in leadership despite repeated social and political challenges that could otherwise destabilize his position.

Vulnerable Despite his authority, Chargyn is deeply vulnerable in emotional and relational contexts. His reactions to gossip about Batish, and his sensitivity to Chegirtke's provocations, reveal an underlying insecurity that contrasts with his public confidence. The death of his close friend Elebes intensifies this vulnerability, exposing his capacity for grief and moral questioning. In personal relationships, especially within marriage and social judgment, he is easily affected by perception and rumor, showing that his identity is not fully secure. This vulnerability does not weaken his role, but instead adds psychological depth, revealing a leader who must constantly balance emotional fragility with public responsibility.

Batish

Batish is a secondary yet emotionally significant character in novel, representing stability within both family and administrative life. As Chargyn's wife and a skilled accountant in the kolkhoz system, she functions within the practical structures of wartime labor while also embodying emotional restraint in personal relationships. Unlike more impulsive or openly expressive characters, Batish remains composed under pressure, often observing rather than reacting. Her presence in the narrative highlights the quiet emotional labor of women who sustain both household and institutional order during wartime disruption.

Composed Batish is composed in the way she manages emotional and social pressure without visible breakdown or confrontation. Even when exposed to Chegirtke's indirect manipulation or village gossip about marriage and relationships, she does not respond impulsively. Instead, she listens, processes, and withdraws when necessary, as seen when she silently leaves Kakyldak's house after being pressured into discussion about Chegirtke. Her composure also appears in collective settings such as meetings and letter-writing gatherings, where she remains calm and focused rather than engaging in emotional expression. This trait allows her to maintain dignity in situations where others become reactive or emotionally unstable.

Responsible Batish demonstrates responsibility through her role as an accountant and her attention to order, accuracy, and work discipline. She participates in kolkhoz administrative life, handling numbers and supporting production organization during wartime demands. Her responsibility is not only professional but also social, as she maintains balance within her marriage and avoids unnecessary conflict that could disrupt household or village stability. In contrast to emotionally volatile figures, she ensures that tasks are completed and that systems function smoothly. Her sense of responsibility makes her a dependable presence in both domestic and institutional spaces, reinforcing the collective structure of the kolkhoz.

Reserved Batish is reserved in both speech and emotional expression, rarely revealing her inner thoughts directly. In conversations about marriage proposals or personal matters involving Chegirtke, she remains silent or minimally responsive, choosing not to openly declare approval or rejection. This restraint is not passivity but a controlled withholding of emotional disclosure. Even in moments of personal discomfort or social pressure, she maintains distance rather than confrontation. Her reserved nature creates an emotional contrast with more expressive characters in the novel and reflects a survival strategy within a socially tense environment where open expression can lead to misunderstanding or manipulation.

Chegirtke

Chegirtke is one of the most disruptive figures in novel, functioning as a catalyst for conflict, rumor, and manipulation within the kolkhoz community. He moves between administrative spaces and village life, presenting himself as socially connected and politically informed, yet his actions are driven by personal gain rather than collective responsibility. Through alcohol-fueled speech, strategic flattery, and constant gossip, he interferes in relationships and undermines trust among villagers. His presence exposes the fragility of social order during wartime and highlights how informal power can operate alongside official structures.

Manipulative Chegirtke is highly manipulative, consistently using conversation as a tool to influence others for personal advantage. In his interactions with Chargyn, he mixes humor, political commentary, and indirect insults to provoke emotional reactions while maintaining a façade of friendliness. He also strategically introduces topics such as Batish and Zaryl to test emotional boundaries and destabilize Chargyn's composure. At Kakyldak's house, he encourages jealousy and resentment by reshaping her perception of relationships and authority figures. His manipulation is not direct force but psychological pressure, relying on suggestion, exaggeration, and selective truth to shape how others interpret events and people around them.

Opportunistic Chegirtke operates with clear opportunism, adapting his behavior depending on who he is interacting with and what benefit he can gain. He frequently refers to his "connections" in regional and central offices, using this claimed influence to assert authority in conversations. He avoids hard labor and military service while presenting himself as someone who can easily return to higher positions through networking. In village disputes, he positions himself where tension already exists, using conflict as an opening to increase his relevance. His opportunism is evident in how he shifts alliances and narratives, always seeking advantage rather than consistency or loyalty.

Provocative Chegirtke is fundamentally provocative, deliberately creating emotional and social tension in almost every interaction. He mocks Chargyn indirectly, provokes jealousy by mentioning Batish,

and inflames Kakyldak's anger by encouraging her grievances. His speech style is intentionally layered with irony, exaggeration, and insinuation, designed to unsettle listeners and expose hidden emotions. Even when appearing friendly, he introduces topics that lead to conflict or discomfort. His provocativeness is not accidental but habitual, making him a destabilizing presence in both private and public settings. This trait positions him as a key source of narrative tension and social disruption in the novel.

Kakyldak

Kakyldak is a strongly individualized village woman, often positioned at the center of social tension, rumor, and conflict. She represents the emotional volatility of everyday village life under wartime pressure, where personal grievances easily merge with public accusations. Working at the mill and participating in collective labor, she is deeply embedded in the economic life of the kolkhoz, yet her interactions with authority are frequently confrontational. Through her sharp speech, sudden reactions, and refusal to remain silent under perceived injustice, she becomes a figure through whom issues of accountability, gendered authority, and social friction are expressed.

Impulsive Kakyldak is impulsive in the way she reacts quickly to perceived injustice without filtering her emotions or considering consequences. At the mill, her confrontation with Chargyn escalates rapidly when the issue of loans and receipts is raised, leading her to reject explanations and demand immediate proof of fairness. Her decision to run out of the mill shouting accusations shows how quickly she moves from disagreement to public escalation. This impulsiveness is not strategic but emotional, driven by immediate frustration and distrust. It places her in constant tension with administrative authority, as she often responds before fully processing situations.

Defiant Kakyldak is defiant in her resistance to authority, particularly when she feels humiliated or ignored by official structures. She openly challenges Chargyn during the mill incident, refusing to accept verbal explanations without documentation and insisting on her own version of truth. Even when confronted by collective opinion or attempts to calm her, she maintains her position and resists withdrawal or compromise. Her defiance also appears in her refusal to be silenced by gossip or social pressure, as she actively voices her grievances in public spaces. This trait positions her as someone unwilling to submit to institutional or social authority without question.

Emotionally reactive Kakyldak is emotionally reactive, often allowing feelings of anger, shame, or frustration to shape her behavior immediately. Her responses are not mediated by reflection but by the intensity of the moment, which makes her highly sensitive to insult or perceived disrespect. In interactions involving Chegirtke and Chargyn, she is easily influenced by tone, rumor, and suggestion, which intensifies her emotional instability. This reactivity is also evident in how quickly she becomes involved in accusations and village disputes, where personal emotion and collective gossip reinforce each other. Her emotional reactivity makes her both expressive and vulnerable within the social structure of the kolkhoz.

Kanysh

Kanysh is a maternal figure in *The People of Our Time*, representing endurance, memory, and emotional stability during wartime separation. As the mother of Kaseyin, she stands at the center of waiting, uncertainty, and fragmented wartime communication. Her life is shaped by the absence of her son and the emotional burden of incomplete news from the front. At the same time, she becomes a symbolic host for displaced lives, including Lyuba and her child, which extends her maternal role beyond her biological family. Through her quiet presence, Kanysh reflects the emotional structure of the home front, where survival is defined by patience and hope.

Patient Kanysh is patient in her long-term endurance of uncertainty regarding her son's fate. Even when letters stop arriving and rumors circulate in the village, she does not collapse into panic but continues waiting with restrained hope. Her patience is not passive resignation but an active emotional discipline shaped by wartime conditions. She maintains daily routines, participates in village life, and con-

tinues to care for those around her while holding inner anxiety. This sustained waiting defines her character, showing how patience becomes a survival strategy for mothers whose children are at the front.

Maternal Kanysh is deeply maternal, extending care beyond her immediate family to anyone who enters her household. Her acceptance of Lyuba and the child demonstrates an instinctive protective response toward vulnerable lives affected by war. She provides food, shelter, and emotional warmth, treating others with the same attentiveness she gives to her own son. Her maternal nature is expressed through nurturing actions rather than speech, emphasizing care as practice rather than declaration. This trait positions her as a moral center in the village, where hospitality and protection become extensions of motherhood under wartime conditions.

Resigned Kanysh is resigned in her acceptance of wartime suffering and uncertainty, understanding that many outcomes are beyond her control. She does not resist the realities of war or attempt to challenge larger political forces; instead, she adapts emotionally to loss, absence, and disruption. This resignation is visible in her quiet endurance of fear and her willingness to accept contradictory or incomplete information about her son. However, this is not defeat but a form of emotional adaptation, allowing her to continue functioning within a destabilized world. Her resignation reflects the broader condition of civilians living through prolonged wartime uncertainty.

Dmitriy

Dmitriy is an old blacksmith and skilled worker, representing the endurance of manual labor and the transformation of traditional craft into industrial wartime production. He is closely connected to the kolkhoz economy through his workshop, where ironwork, tools, and repair work support agricultural and military needs. Unlike administrative figures or politically driven characters, Dmitriy is defined by physical labor, technical skill, and lived experience. His character reflects continuity between the older generation of craftsmanship and the new demands of collectivized, mechanized production during war.

Industrious Dmitriy is industrious in his constant engagement with physical work, especially in the blacksmith workshop where he shapes, repairs, and produces essential tools. Even during wartime fatigue and personal worry, he continues working long hours, often returning home late and waking early without complaint. His labor is not occasional but continuous, reflecting a deep internal discipline tied to responsibility rather than external pressure. The rhythmic repetition of hammering iron, maintaining tools, and supporting production shows his consistent contribution to the kolkhoz economy. His industriousness makes him a foundational figure in sustaining material life during wartime shortages.

Experienced Dmitriy is experienced, carrying knowledge gained through years of practical labor rather than formal education. He understands materials, tools, and production processes intuitively, allowing him to adapt traditional blacksmithing skills to new demands such as wartime equipment repair. His reflections on earlier times, conflicts, and changing work conditions show a long historical memory that connects past and present labor systems. He does not learn through instruction but through accumulated practice, which gives him authority in his field. This experience also allows him to interpret change critically, comparing earlier rural life with the increasing mechanization of production.

Reflective Dmitriy is reflective in his internal attitude toward work, war, and social transformation. While engaged in physical labor, he often pauses to think about broader changes in society, including the shift from old village life to collective industrial production. His reflections are not abstract philosophy but grounded observations shaped by lived experience, such as comparing past rivalries with present cooperation. He also contemplates the impact of war on families, especially the uncertainty surrounding his son Sergey. This reflective quality adds emotional depth to his character, showing that even a labor-centered figure carries inner thought and moral awareness beyond physical work.

THEMES

Work: Collective Sacrifice, and Socialist Labor

In *The People of Our Time*, war and collective labor form a single interconnected system that structures village life, transforming both economic activity and social relations. The outbreak of the Second World War immediately redirects kolkhoz production toward military needs, as villagers are required to supply grain, butter, and horses for the Red Army. Charyn organizes deliveries of nearly 39,700 pounds of grain and hundreds of pounds of butter, while also coordinating the mobilization of forty horses with full equipment. These material demands show how agricultural work is directly absorbed into wartime logistics, making farming indistinguishable from national defense.

Labor in the kolkhoz is collective, organized through brigades where men, women, and older villagers work side by side in fields, storage yards, and processing areas. Women cut wheat with sickles, repair sacks, sort grain, and transport produce, while tractors and machines operate alongside manual labor. Dmitriy's blacksmith workshop supports this system by producing and repairing tools essential for both agriculture and military supply, linking industrial craft to collective production. Even children are introduced into the system through supervised tasks, showing how labor extends across generations.

War intensifies this structure by redefining work as patriotic duty. Public meetings emphasize that every labor contribution directly supports the front, and speeches frame production as a moral obligation. The slogan "Everything for the Front" is physically present in the blacksmith's workshop, reinforcing the ideological connection between work and survival. Soldiers and civilians are linked through supply chains, letters, and collective ceremonies of departure and farewell, where villagers send food, clothing, and horses with emotional speeches and rituals.

The theme also appears in moments of personal sacrifice, such as women working long hours in fields while waiting for news of sons and husbands at the front. Emotional suffering is absorbed into labor discipline, as grief does not stop production but strengthens commitment to it. Through these scenes, the novel presents a unified system in which war demands collective sacrifice, and socialist labor becomes the mechanism through which survival, duty, and national purpose are achieved.

Illustrative moment: Charyn announces strict supply duties, listing grain, butter, and horses to be prepared within a short deadline. Women stand in the crowd, many silently worried about sons and husbands at the front, yet they still agree to sew warm clothing and contribute food. After the speeches, the community begins organizing immediately, horses are selected, carts are prepared, and workers return to fields and storage areas without delay. The emotional atmosphere is heavy, but the practical work continues without interruption, showing how collective effort absorbs both duty and grief.

Gender: Women in War

In the novel, gender functions as a lived wartime condition that reshapes work, relationships, and emotional life across the village. With men absent at the front, women become the main force sustaining both household stability and collective production. Their roles extend far beyond domestic life, as they work in fields, attend kolkhoz meetings, and manage the emotional atmosphere of the community. Motherhood is not presented as a private experience but as a continuous form of responsibility shaped by waiting, uncertainty, and survival.

Kanysh represents maternal endurance in its most sustained form. She cares for Mikola-Asker while also living with constant uncertainty about her son Kaseyin. Her daily life is built around care work, hospitality, and silent worry, showing motherhood as an ongoing emotional condition rather than a fixed family role. Ayganysh shows another side of this experience. She gives birth during wartime and continues field labor and household duties, carrying motherhood through physical exhaustion and separation from her husband.

Younger women such as Zaryl and Batish express emotional endurance in quieter, more contained ways. Zaryl's waiting for Kaseyin is marked by silence, uncertainty, and emotional restraint, especially when rumors and incomplete news circulate in the village. Batish maintains discipline in both work and personal life, balancing administrative responsibility with private emotional tension, including jealousy and social pressure.

Across these different experiences, emotional endurance becomes a shared feminine condition. Women absorb grief from war, death, and separation, yet continue working without withdrawing from collective life. Their emotional pain is often expressed briefly and then folded back into labor, routine, or care for others.

At the same time, wartime conditions expand women's roles in visible and practical ways. They take on agricultural production, administrative work, and logistical tasks that were previously male dominated. However, this expansion does not reduce emotional responsibility. Instead, women carry both material labor and emotional stability at the same time, becoming the core of village life during war.

Illustrative moment: Chargyn supervised the large storage yard, checking grain output and coordinating transport. Akia and the group of women repaired sacks, sorted wheat, and prepared apples for shipment in the packing area. Burma's brigade cleaned and dried grain in the threshing section, working late into the evening. Lyuba assisted with grain loading and helped carry filled sacks to the storehouse. Marusya's team transported fertilizer to the fields using three carts. Zaryl led a group of pioneers who collected apples and sorted damaged fruit for disposal in the far corner shed.

War: Migration

Lyuba, a Ukrainian woman, arrives in the village with a baby and is taken in by Kanysh's household due to confusion and mistranslation. She appears suddenly in a foreign environment, speaking through fragmented interpretation, and is initially misidentified by villagers as a relative connected to Kaseyin. This misunderstanding reflects how war disrupts identity, language, and social clarity, turning arrival itself into uncertainty.

Lyuba's presence creates emotional and social confusion in the household. The villagers try to interpret her story through limited information, while she herself struggles to understand local customs and greetings. Despite this confusion, she is still treated with hospitality, fed, and included in the domestic space. The contrast between her displacement and the warmth of reception highlights how war produces accidental connections between strangers who would otherwise never meet.

At the same time, her situation is directly tied to another form of displacement involving Kaseyin, whose wartime movements connect different geographies and lives. The baby becomes a symbol of disrupted boundaries between nations, families, and identities, especially when the question of naming arises. The choice of a name reflects competing emotional claims and cultural affiliations, showing how even identity is unsettled during war.

This moment captures how war displaces not only soldiers but also civilians, creating unstable households where strangers become temporary family. It shows gendered vulnerability through Lyuba as a mother in exile, while also revealing the village's capacity to absorb displaced lives into its collective structure, even when full understanding is impossible.

Illustrative moment: During seed sorting, village women saw a woman with a baby asking for Kanysh, Kaseyin's mother. One woman mistakenly translated her words, saying she was Kanysh's daughter-in-law. The villagers led her to the house, where she was warmly welcomed despite confusion. The Ukrainian woman was surprised by local customs, including bowing and touching greetings. She admired their kindness and hospitality. Later, villagers gathered in the evening, including Dmitriy, Nadezhda, Akman, Akia, Marusya, and Shambet's family.

Forced Migration: Trauma, Memory, and Loss

In the 1930s, around 700 Kyrgyz families, roughly 3,500 people, were deported to the present-day Kherson region of Ukraine. There they lived through extreme hardship and became witnesses to two major historical catastrophes: the famine of 1932–1933 and later the occupation by Nazi Germany and Romania during the Second World War. These communities endured layered suffering across decades, experiencing displacement, hunger, violence, and constant insecurity. Despite this, they shared their hardships with the local population and survived together in conditions of deep historical trauma. This background forms an important but often overlooked layer of Kyrgyz historical memory, rarely represented in literature due to earlier political restrictions. Sydykbekov's novel preserves this memory indirectly through personal experience rather than open historical explanation.

Myskal is only six years old when her family is taken from their homeland. She grows up in Ukraine, far from the mountains and villages she barely remembers, carrying a sense of separation that becomes part of her identity. Even before she understands life fully, her future is shaped by tradition: she is promised in marriage to Turumbek through a nomadic custom arranged in early childhood. This promise becomes a quiet expectation that follows her across time and distance.

When Myskal finally returns to Kyrgyzstan as a young woman, it is not a simple homecoming. She comes with hope of reconnecting with her roots and meeting Turumbek, but instead she learns that he has already died. The meeting she imagined turns into absence, and the place that should have given her belonging instead gives her grief.

Her life is disrupted again by war. She returns to Ukraine, where she loses her mother during the occupation. This moment breaks her connection to family completely and leaves her without the original center of her life. After surviving this, she comes back to Kamka's house, carrying her experiences across both countries.

Myskal's journey shows how trauma does not stay in one place or one moment. It follows her through childhood exile, lost love, war, and return, turning memory itself into something she must live with every day.

Illustrative moment: Myskal returned from the war front. She arrived in Kamka from Ukraine after she had survived intense combat experiences. She told Kamka how she had taken revenge for her mother's death, lying in ambush and attacking a passing vehicle, killing officers before she was evacuated from the front by airplane. When Satai and Salmoorbek spread the news of her return, the villagers were shocked and were unsure whether Kamka had ever had a daughter. Soon, curiosity grew and people gathered at Kamka's house. Myskal reunited with Kamka, and the village was filled with discussion, celebration, and reflection on war.

Appearance: Rumor, and Social Instability

Chegirtke and Kakyldak function as key carriers of this unstable information flow, turning private issues into public tension and personal grievances into collective judgment.

Chegirtke deliberately manipulates conversations to provoke emotional reactions. In his interaction with Chargyn, he mixes alcohol, flattery, and political talk, while repeatedly bringing up Batish and past promises. His comments are never neutral; they are designed to test loyalty and reopen unresolved emotional wounds. A key source of his hostility is personal jealousy: Chegirtke had shown interest in marrying Batish, and he continues to feel resentment when Chargyn ultimately marries her instead. This unfulfilled desire deepens his envy and becomes one of the emotional motivations behind his attempts to undermine Chargyn. Later, he escalates his influence by encouraging Kakyldak to turn her anger into a formal complaint against Chargyn, transforming a personal dispute into an institutional conflict.

Kakyldak, in turn, embodies emotional immediacy and social volatility. At the mill, her anger over the loan dispute and the absence of a receipt turns into a public accusation. When she runs out of the mill shouting and injured, claiming Chargyn has harmed her, the entire village becomes involved. The boundary between truth and interpretation collapses as villagers gather, debate, and take sides. Even Kamka's defense of Chargyn shows how quickly social opinion forms and hardens.

The wider community is repeatedly drawn into similar moments of uncertainty. War rumors, accusations of infidelity, and misunderstandings about soldiers' relationships spread rapidly through women's conversations and village gatherings. The arrival of the Russian woman connected to Kaseyin further intensifies suspicion, as people try to interpret unclear identities and relationships.

Through these scenes, the novel shows that rumor is not merely background noise but a structuring force of village life. It shapes reputations, influences decisions, and destabilizes trust, revealing how fragile social cohesion becomes under pressure from war, authority, emotional rivalry, and unfulfilled desire.

Illustrative moment: Chegirtke, drunk and excited at the gathering, boasted to Kakyldak that if Chargyn became chairman, he would fix her teeth better than gold, and make her "sing" with happiness. Kakyldak, already angry and in pain from her broken tooth, believed his words and grew even more emotional, cursing Chargyn and the situation. Chegirtke continued joking and promising benefits, speaking loudly about future power and wealth. Later, after the conflict with Chargyn spread in the village, Chegirt-

ke urged Kakyldak to officially complain and sue. He pushed her to accuse Chargyn seriously, mixing promises of justice with manipulation. Kalyipa hesitated, but Chegirtke insisted, turning village gossip and anger into a formal accusation.